

Principles for a Better Grand Avenue



Prepared for the City of Saint Paul
& Summit Hill Association
By Michael Lamb Consulting
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Introduction

The East Grand Avenue Overlay District Advisory Committee met for their first meeting November 9, 2022 and met a total of seven times over the months of November, January, February and March. The purpose and charge of the Advisory Committee was to establish a set of principles to guide the city's zoning text amendment for the Overlay District, to be prepared later in 2023. Over the course of these meetings, the Committee participated in a number of exercises, surveys and discussions to determine a commonly held set of values. The meeting format was organized around and guided by an 'informed-consent' model for the Committee to prioritize the principles with the understanding that complete consensus was not required.

The Committee meetings included a review of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, current zoning and the overlay district, Climate Action & Resilience Plan, redlining, Metropolitan Council growth projections, heritage preservation and cultural policies & districts, selected history of the avenue, and the Committee listened to presentations from guest speakers about the real estate market, development & construction and affordable housing. Based on image/word surveys, responses and comments, 7 principles received overall support (informed consent) from a draft list of 13:

- Support a walkable, pedestrian-scaled built environment.
- Manage parking on-street, behind buildings or underground.
- Activate ground floor spaces in appropriate building types.
- Consider evaluating building design & materials through a future zoning study.
- Ensure new building heights are sensitive to the existing neighborhood context.
- Allow density and taller buildings at the corners with development opportunity and/or under-utilized lots.
- Maintain existing building elements, vertical proportions & frontage conditions found at mid-block locations.

Committee Members

Alex Peeper

Ari Parritz

Brian Wenger

Bridget Allan Ales

Carolyn Robertson

Chad Miller

Dan Marshall

Dominic Ciresi

EG

Ian Ball

Kathryn Olmstead

Sara Joy Proppe

Zack Farrell

Support a walkable, pedestrian-scaled built environment



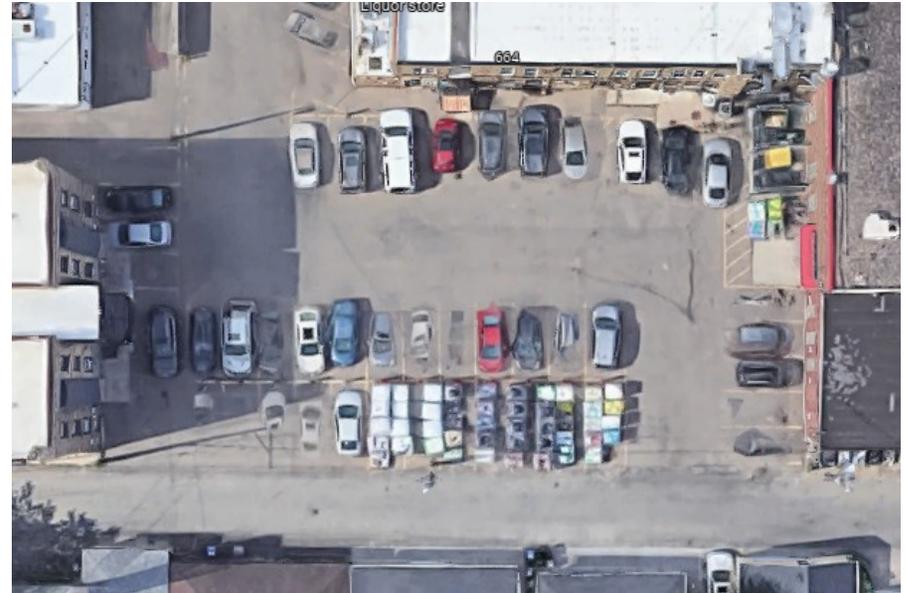
- Support patio, outdoor eating and gathering spaces that front onto Grand Avenue
- Allow setbacks and patios specifically for outdoor gathering and dining
- Building frontages should be oriented to the public sidewalk/ street and contain pedestrian-scaled elements like transparent shopfronts, awnings, stoops, porches, signage, etc.



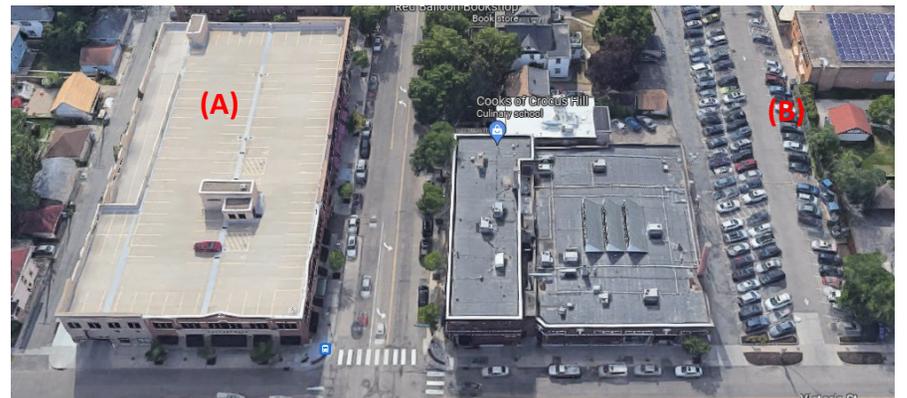
Manage parking on-street, behind buildings or underground



- Parking should be located behind principal buildings
- Surface parking should not be allowed to front Grand Avenue
- Drive thru uses with direct access from Grand Avenue should be limited
- Regulate location and landscape of surface lots
- District and development-specific parking can include structures, dedicated and/or below surface lots and under buildings



- Parking on rear half of lot with access from the alley



- District parking solutions can include structures (A), dedicated surface lots (B) and underground locations

Activate ground floor spaces in appropriate building types



- If a multi-family or mixed-use building includes commercial/retail space, it must have a transparent shopfront that relates to and defines the public ROW/sidewalk
- Minimum shopfront window transparency; posters and other ad displays should not block window transparency
- Primary entries oriented to the public sidewalk; corner entrances preferred



Consider evaluating building design & materials through a future zoning study



- Committee recommends a more detailed study to prepare guidelines/regulations that address quality design and building materials



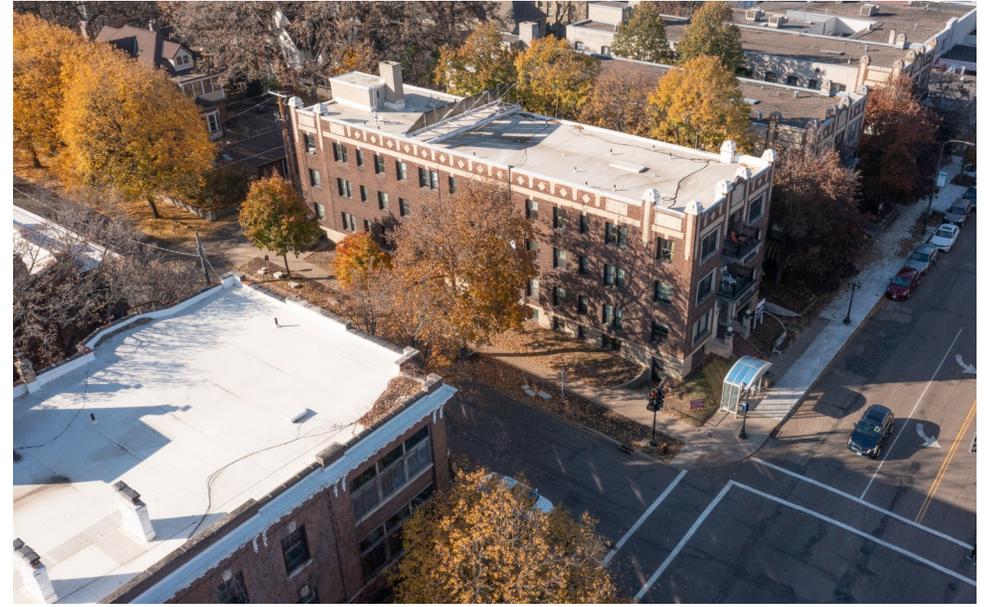
Ensure new building heights are sensitive to the existing neighborhood context



- If buildings exceed three stories, they should include step-backs, reduced lot coverage, and other features to mitigate height relationship, shadows and other impacts to the surrounding neighborhood
- Taller buildings should be set back from the alley to allow for parking in the rear and/or include step-backs to respond to the scale and height of adjacent neighborhood buildings



Allow density and taller buildings at the corners where development opportunities are available



- New development and taller buildings should be allowed at corners
- Prioritize mixed use buildings at key intersection locations
- Corner building heights should be carefully managed
- Lot coverage and height might be regulated by a ratio
- Under-utilized lots may include surface parking lots or one story buildings with large setbacks from Grand Avenue



Maintain existing building elements, vertical proportions & frontage conditions found at mid-block locations



- New development at mid-block locations should include the following:
- Vertical window proportions (1)
- Vertically oriented building bays (2)
- Elevated terraces and/or front yards (3)
- Front entries that are well defined and legible from the street (4)
- Details should include horizontal expressions with cornices, courses and material change (5)
- Converted businesses located in existing residential building types should maintain lawn/greenspace setbacks, if applicable

